



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Wisconsin*

517 East Wisconsin Avenue

414 / 297-1700

Milwaukee, WI 53202

TTY 414 / 297-1088

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NEWS SUMMARY:

United States Attorney Steven M. Biskupic announced today that a federal grand jury had returned a two-count indictment charging STEVEN R. HIRTZINGER (DOB: 9/3/81), a flight attendant, with tampering with emergency equipment on board.

Between August 8, 2004 and December 22, 2004, Hertzinger allegedly tampered with oxygen tanks, personal breathing masks, fire extinguishers, and other safety equipment while a flight attendant for Pinnacle Airlines. Pinnacle Airlines provides commuter service to Northwest Airlines as Midwest Airlink. According the investigation, several incidents had occurred in which required emergency equipment had been tampered with while Hetzinger was the sole flight attendant. (Pinnacle commuter flights are manned by a crew of three; pilot, co-pilot and one flight attendant.) Numerous flight had to be delayed or cancelled because of the tampering.

If convicted of these charges, Hertzinger faces a maximum term of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Hertzinger, who lives in Chaska, Minnesota, is currently out on bond. His next court appearance is scheduled for January 7, 2005, in District Court in Milwaukee.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Gordon P. Giampietro.

The public is cautioned that an indictment is merely the formal method of returning charges against an individual and does not constitute inference of his or her guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until such time, if ever, that the government established his or her guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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For more information contact:

Assistant United States Attorney Gordon P. Giampietro
Public Affairs Liaison Francia Wendelborn
414-297-1700